



# GUIDELINES

## **GUIDELINE A.13 – Use of Christmas Trees in Regulated Occupancies**

### **A.13.1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this guideline is to assist anyone, including business owners and managers, school officials, and maintenance workers with understanding the requirements of the California Fire Code Section 806 and the California Code of Regulations, Title 19 regarding the use of Christmas trees in public assemblies, schools, institutions, retail stores, high-rise buildings, and public areas of hotels, motels, apartments, and condominium buildings.

### **A.13.2 SCOPE**

The requirements in this guideline apply to State Fire Marshal regulated occupancies including Group A, E, I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, M, R-1, R-2 and R-4 occupancies as defined in Chapter 2 of the California Fire Code.

### **A.13.4 PROCEDURE**

- The required width of any portion of a means of egress shall not be obstructed by a Christmas tree.
- Candles and open flames shall not be used on or near Christmas trees and decorative vegetation.
- The use of unlisted electrical wiring and lighting on Christmas trees and natural or artificial decorative vegetation shall be prohibited.

### **NATURAL CUT TREES**

1. Natural cut trees are prohibited in Group I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, and R-4 occupancies per CFC Section 806.1.1. These are primarily hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, residential care facilities, and other occupancies where persons may require the assistance of others to exit.
2. Natural cut trees are permitted in the following occupancies only when they are protected by an approved automatic sprinkler system: public assemblies such as restaurants and bars, schools, retail stores, high-rise buildings, and common areas of hotels, motels, and apartment or condominium buildings with more than two units.
3. Natural cut trees in public assemblies, schools, and common areas of residential buildings shall be fire retardant treated with a chemical approved by the California State



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Fire Marshal in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Application of the flame retardant shall be done by a certified applicator registered with the California State Fire Marshal. Treated trees shall have a tag with the following information affixed to the base of a low branch on the tree: CFSM Seal of Registration, name of flame retardant used, name of registered applicator, registration number, and date of application. (Title 19, Division 1, §308)

4. Natural cut trees, where allowed, shall have the trunk bottoms cut off at least 0.5 (1/2") inch above the original cut and placed in a support device in compliance with the following section:
5. Support devices for natural cut trees shall be stable and shall meet the following criteria:
  - a. The device shall hold the tree securely and be of adequate size to avoid tipping over the tree.
  - b. The device shall be capable of containing a minimum two-day supply of water.
  - c. The water level, when full, shall cover the tree stem at least 2 inches. The water level shall be maintained above the fresh cut and checked at least once daily.
6. Dryness: Natural cut trees shall be removed from buildings when the needles fall off readily when a tree branch is shaken or if the needles are brittle and break when bent between the thumb and index finger. The tree shall be checked daily for dryness.
7. Natural cut trees shall be kept a distance from heat vents or open flames or heat producing devices at least equal to the height of the tree.

## ARTIFICIAL TREES

1. Artificial trees and vegetation shall meet the flame propagation performance criteria of NFPA 701. This information should be verified prior to purchase of the tree by noting the information on the packaging included with the tree. The information shall be retained and readily available upon inspection by a member of the Newport Beach fire department.
2. The use of electrical wiring and lighting on artificial trees constructed entirely of metal shall be prohibited.



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Summary Chart - **NATURAL CUT CHRISTMAS TREES**

OCCUPANCY TYPE	NOT PERMITTED	REQUIRES FIRE RETARDANT	REQUIRES SPRINKLERS IN BUILDING
Hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, and residential care facilities	X		
Schools, public assemblies, and common areas of residential buildings		X	X
Retail stores and high-rise buildings			X